

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the application are respectfully requested in view of the amendments and remarks herewith, which place the application into condition for allowance. The present amendment is being made to facilitate prosecution of the application.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 1, 3-7, and 9-13 are currently pending. Claims 17, 19-21, 23-25, 29, and 30 are hereby canceled. Claims 1, 7, and 13 are independent. Claims 1, 3-7, and 9-13 are hereby amended. No new matter has been introduced. Support for this amendment is provided throughout the Specification as originally filed.

Changes to the claims are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §101, §102, §103, or §112. Rather, these changes are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled.

II. OBJECTIONS TO THE SPECIFICATION

The title of the application is amended herein to overcome the objection to the specification. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this objection to the specification.

III. CLAIM OBJECTIONS

Claims 3-6, 9-12, 19, 20, 23, 24, and 30 were objected to for the informality that dependent claims should start with "The" rather than "A." Applicants disagree with the assertion that dependent claims are required to start with "The" and point to the examples in MPEP

608.01(n). However, rather than argue the semantics, Applicants have amended the claims as suggested by the Examiner.

Claim 13 has been amended to a correct typographical error noted by the Examiner.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objections to the claims.

IV. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 4 has been amended to overcome the §112 rejection, the feature now is recited in claim 1.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the §112 rejection of claim 4.

V. ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants thank the Examiner for noting claims 4-6 and 10-12 recited allowable subject matter.

Applicants have put this application in condition for allowance by reciting the feature of claim 4 into independent claim 1 and reciting the feature of claim 10 into independent claims 7 and 13.

VI. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19-21, 23-25, 29, and 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,977,676 to Sato et al. (hereinafter, merely “Sato”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,682,197 to Moghadam et al. (hereinafter, merely “Moghadam”).

Independent claims 1, 7, and 13 have been amended to recite allowable subject matter thereby obviating the rejection of those claims.

Claims 3-6 and 9-12 depend from one of independent claims 1 and 7 and should also be allowable. The remaining claims have been canceled.

Thus, the present application is in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Claims 1, 3-7, and 9-13 are in condition for allowance. In the event the Examiner disagrees with any of statements appearing above with respect to the disclosure in the cited reference, or references, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner specifically indicate those portions of the reference, or references, providing the basis for a contrary view.

Please charge any additional fees that may be needed, and credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is believed that all of the claims in this application are patentable and Applicants respectfully request early passage to issue of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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